

Neighborhood Grapevine

News from the City of Milwaukee's
Department of Neighborhood Services



Typical bath on the 9th floor shows missing plumbing fixtures. There was evidence of drug activity and other nuisance conditions such as rats and garbage.

Largest single Nuisance Property shut down in DNS history

In 1994 the first complaint came in to DNS on 2905 W. Wisconsin Ave. 87 complaints and over 200 code violations later something had to be done. The final straw was leaking sewer gas on the upper floors and open flames from illegal drug use. As a result, the nine-story apartment building known as the Churchill Apartments on 29th and Wisconsin was ordered vacated and boarded up by DNS Plumbing and Commercial Enforcement staff. The ninth floor was sealed and the windows were left open to vent the gas hazard.

On May 10th the department posted the building and ordered all the occupants out in 5 days. On May 16th DPW crews boarded up the building after Milwaukee Police and DNS inspectors cleared each of the 74 apartments. Some of the units had garbage piled to the ceiling and bloated cans of rotting food. About 40 of the units were occupied and a week after the board up it was opened for a day to allow residents to take out any remaining belongings.

Over 200 code violations were uncorrected and pipes sprung leaks in the walls during the move out. In addition to used condoms, the 9th floor was littered with blunts which are cigar wrappers used for holding marijuana. A small fire in one of the units left smoke damage on a sink and ceiling.

The West End Landlord Compact called an emergency meeting. DNS representatives

See Churchill Apt. shut down page 2

Project CLEANS Sweep unites City Services against crime and grime

For the first time the combined resources of the City of Milwaukee Police Department, the Department of Neighborhood Services and Department of Public Works Sanitation Bureau were focused on targeted parts of Milwaukee. The result was a unified approach for residents interested in improving their community.

The Cooperative Law Enforcement and Neighborhood Services Sweep or CLEANS Sweep was conducted in 15 areas identified with significant investment opportunity. CLEANS Sweep was a way to keep that momentum moving in a positive direction. By linking City services together the impact is immediate and more visible. This program is one of many steps in the City's new Strategic Housing Plan which is available online at the City's web site at www.milwaukee.gov.

The CLEANS Sweep project started on July 22nd with drug sweeps by Milwaukee Police. DNS inspectors went through issuing orders for garbage, graffiti, and nuisance vehicles. DPW Sanitation crews picked up large items and issued orders for uncut grass. The sweep ran through August 5th, 2002. This project utilized discretionary services of the various departments and resulted in no additional budget costs.

Positive impacts were noted by the sweep. Milwaukee Police made a number of arrests in the TIN and CPA. As a result, 673 traffic citations were issued, 215 parking citations, 1,474 City and State arrests, and 96 firearms recovered. Crime is down 44% in the TINs and CPAs.

DPW added its statistics to the effort. There were 984 brush stops, 2523 furniture stops, 473 tons of garbage, 971 tires, 175 referrals to other

See CLEANS Sweep page 2

Pictures from the field:



QUESTION: What's wrong with this picture? It's a door to a chimney. So it's OK to vent two dryer vents to it ...right?.

Answer: In theory it sounds good because hot air rises. The problem is the dryer exhaust contains more than hot air. It contains lint, moisture and carbon monoxide. It is forced with a blower as well. The result is lint could build up and clog the vent or flue guard. Secondly, the air pressure could backflow into the basement and gases from other vented devices like the furnace or water heater could be forced out into the room. That carbon monoxide could silently kill all the occupants. Dryer vents should take the shortest route outside with a minimal number of bends. ☹

Churchill Apartments shut down from Page 1

updated the group on the action the department was taking. Many of the problems at the Churchill apartments were due to the lack of screening of the tenants. The Landlord Compact is designed to stop the shuttling of destructive tenants between apartments and to share information about rental properties in their area. The Compact was shown a video of the conditions inside of the building and told about the board-up plan.

The building belongs to Satinder Sharma of Skokie Illinois. The more than 200 code violations included an inoperable fire alarm system, no smoke detectors, no fire extinguishers, unlatched fire doors, blocked exits, possible open asbestos around plumbing, no hot water, unvented dryers, numerous plumbing leaks, open walls, a broken elevator, garbage inside and out, and many broken windows.

Community Advocates assisted with the relocation of many of the residents. By the end of the boardup, everyone had a place to stay for the night.

This was the largest single building closure by the department. DNS and the Milwaukee Police Department worked together in the planning and process of the shutdown. No problems have since been reported. The building is in the process of being re-possessed by the bank. The City Attorney is seeking to add the extra costs of staff time as a result of the nuisance boardup action as a special charge on the tax bill. ☹



Mayor John O. Norquist, Aldermen Robert G. Donovan and Michael J. Murphy and residents from the Layton Boulevards West Neighborhood group meet with reporters to talk about the Project Cleans Sweep.

Project CLEANS Sweep from Page 1

departments and 345 alleys swept.

DNS 151 Nuisance vehicle orders , 181 graffiti orders and 86 other litter nuisance orders during the sweep.

Residents and community organizers talked about the sweep's impact, what positive changes are occurring in their neighborhoods, and their future hopes for improvement. Mayor Norquist and City department heads discussed what problems are being targeted, what results are expected and what initiatives within the City's Strategic Housing Plan are coming next.

There are 15 targeted areas across the City of Milwaukee. Included are the 10 Target Investment Neighborhoods (TINs) and the five Catalytic Project Area's (CPAs). TINs and CPAs are areas identified by DNS and DCD with neighborhood associations' input. They are areas with a strong neighborhood association and lots of catalytic growth potential. By forming these strong anchor projects, future growth is expected to add to the area. It promises to be a win-win for the City and the neighborhoods. These joint efforts and targeting of resources reflects the implementation of a significant component of the housing strategy. ☹

DID YOU KNOW: Grease does not belong in the sewer

One of the items plumbing inspection investigates is grease in a sewer. While most household dishwashing can handle grease, commercial operations can overwhelm a City sewer. That is why the code requires grease traps and their periodic cleaning on "greasy operations."

Unfortunately a problem is typically uncovered after a violation. Environmental Engineering will make a referral to DNS plumbing Inspection and then DNS inspectors will work to locate the offender and order corrections. Inspectors typically enter a nearby businesses and inspect the trap as well as the process of disposing the grease. If anyone suspects a violation, they can contact the DNS Plumbing section by calling 286-3361. ☹

New Pitbull and Rottweiler Ordinance to Impact Dog Owners

Chapter 78-22 of the City of Milwaukee Code of Ordinances was recently changed to place special requirements on owners of dogs that are one half or more American Staffordshire terrier, Staffordshire terrier, American pitbull terrier, pitbull terrier, miniature pitbull terrier or Rottweiler.

It is believed that dog owners who follow these requirements will reduce the likelihood that their dog will be involved in a biting incident. In addition, people who pass by the dogs in yards or being walked will feel less threatened by the dogs.

Any person who walks a pitbull or Rottweiler must be at least 16 years old and able to control the animal. A person older than 16 unable to control a large Rottweiler may not walk the dog. In addition, the owner of the dog must attend a dog behavior class once each year. These classes are offered by the Wisconsin Humane Society, 431-6110.

There are new fence and kennel requirements. The owner of a pitbull or Rottweiler dog must have one of the following installed in their yard.

Option #1

Install a fence that is sufficient to contain the dog. This would be six feet high for a Rottweiler. A four-foot fence may be sufficient for a small pitbull. Climbable objects may not be placed next to the fence if they allow the dog to jump out of the yard. The fence must be made of non-climbable material (such as stockade type fencing) and must be set at least 12" into the ground to prevent the dog from digging under the fence. (Make sure your fence installer is aware of this requirement!). Special treatment of wood fencing material installed below grade may be required to prevent rotting or corrosion and to avoid future costly repairs. In addition, the fence must be set at least 3 feet from any alley, sidewalk or other public right of way.

A fence higher than 4 feet may not be installed in a front or side yard and 6 feet is the maximum height for a back yard fence. (Note: many dogs can climb standard chain link fences. If you install a chain link fence and your dog learns to climb it, you will be required to replace the fence.) A permit is required to install a fence.

Option #2.

Install a kennel sufficient to contain the dog. The kennel must have a concrete floor. The fencing for the kennel must be non-climbable and may need to be higher than six feet if a doghouse is placed in the kennel, as the dog could climb onto the house and escape the kennel. This can be prevented by installing a securely attached roof on the kennel.

Chain link fencing with an attached roof is acceptable for a kennel. Pre-constructed kennels are available at larger hardware stores. When planning your kennel location keep it at least three feet from the lot line, sidewalk or alley. Note that an approved shelter with bedding and a wind flap is required any time the dog is left outside for more than one hour. You should also consider placing the kennel in a place that will be shaded in the afternoon to provide relief for the dog during the summer.

Rottweilers and pitbulls must be placed in an approved kennel if left outside unless the yard is enclosed with a fence as described previously in option #1. A permit is required to install a kennel.

For information on obtaining a permit to install a fence or kennel call 286-8211. For information on rules related to keeping Rottweilers and pitbulls call 286-5571. ☺



Residents encouraged to disconnect downspouts

Milwaukee residents whose property meets certain criteria are being encouraged to disconnect their roof downspouts. This is part of an effort to divert rainwater from the combined sanitary sewers and help prevent sewage overflows into Lake Michigan.

The Code contains criteria for disconnecting. Most of the precautions are to prevent icing conditions on public walkways or a harmful impact to a neighboring property. Also, the seal needs to be done correctly in the event you need to reconnect. In some cases, the City will pay to have the work done. If you are in a target area set up by DPW's Environmental Engineering, you may qualify for additional assistance in disconnecting your downspout. Phone them at (414) 286-8162 to determine if you are in the target area.

Single and two-family dwellings and detached buildings such as sheds or garages that are accessory to one and two-family dwellings are allowed to disconnect. Such buildings may discharge roof rainwater leaders, conductors or downspouts to finished grade. All discharges to finished grade must meet all of the following provisions summarized below.

- 1) The point of discharge must be a minimum of 2 feet from a basement or a foundation wall or alley property line and 5 feet from all other property lines.
- 2) The discharge must flow parallel to or away from the nearest property line.
- 3) The discharge water shall not discharge to a street, alley or other public way.
- 4) The discharge water shall not create an icy condition on any pedestrian walkways within or adjacent to the subject premises lot lines.
- 5) The downspout hub shall be sealed with a 1" concrete cap or in a manner approved by the commissioner.

If a property is under orders to repair a defective sewer lateral, this provision cannot be used to avoid those repairs. A more complete guide is available on the DNS web site. Just go to the main City Home page at www.milwaukee.gov and click on DNS under City Departments. The complete text of the ordinance regarding rainwater discharge is found in the Milwaukee Code of Ordinances, ch. 225-4. If you have any doubts before you proceed, please contact the City of Milwaukee Plumbing Section at (414) 286-3361. ☺



(Clockwise upper left) Sherri and Matt Dama, Jim Igowsky, and Marty Collins; Al Garcia, Karen Jacobs, Brian Vincent, and Foster Finco; Tim Temperly hands out the trophies, Suzanne Kramer wins MVP, Environmental team takes the field lead by Dave Krey and Richard Alaniz works the piñata for the kids.



DNS Picnic a hit with staff and family!

By Tracy Williams

The annual baseball picnic was a great time. The weather was on our side this year. Over 150 people attended. A BIG THANK YOU to Brian Vincent of the Plumbing section for coordinating the food for the grill plus bringing the soda and condiments. And a VERY BIG THANK YOU to Foster Finco and Bill Kirby for doing such an outstanding job of cooking the hot dogs, brats, Italians and hamburgers plus the roasted corn. Excellent Job!

A BIG THANK YOU to Tim Temperly for coordinating the baseball teams. AND THE WINNERS ARE:

First Place: Nuisance Division Second Place: Code Enforcement Third Place: Trades Division MVP Award - Sue Kramer - Pitcher for the Nuisance Team

A BIG THANK YOU to San Juanita Velez for coordinating the fun for the kids including the pinatas, face painting and the grab bags. The kids really enjoyed the pinatas and face painting and everyone enjoyed the grab bags.

A BIG THANK YOU to Pandora Bender and Stephanie Ruffin for coordinating the sale of the T-shirts and hats where the small profits helped pay for the picnic. And thanks to Todd for the design of the T-shirt.

And finally, a BIG THANK YOU to all the volunteers who helped coordinate the picnic and showed up early to set things up and stayed late to help clean things up. And to the unions, coffee/soda clubs and managers for donating money to pay for this great time.

Please mark your calendar for next year's picnic - Saturday, August 23rd, 2003.

THANKS AGAIN Tracy, Pandora and Karen ☺

Landlord Training News

In 1998, the National Institute of Justice awarded a grant to the Justice Research Center to conduct an evaluation of Safe Streets Now! (SSN!) As you may recall, SSN! existed in Milwaukee for 18 months, housed within DNS and coordinated by Ms. Karin Long and Ms. Vida Mosley-Person of the Landlord Training Program.

The purpose of the evaluation was to evaluate SSN! at the local neighborhood and national replication levels to answer two questions: (1) how effective is the SSN! approach in solving specific local problems? and (2) what are the benefits, costs, and consequences of replicating the SSN! approach through a training of trainers program?

Milwaukee's SSN! Program was selected as one of the 4 case studies. The report stated: "A number of those interviewed in the Milwaukee case studies attributed the program's effectiveness to the character and abilities of Ms. Long and Ms. Mosley-Person. Ms. Long is known among her peers for her facilitation and negotiation skills.. Her ability to build working relationships with other people and agencies was demonstrated by the comprehensive referral system, "no-cost" assistance from the a community based organization Housing Coordinator, and unique negotiation and persuasion tactics, appear to have contributed to the program's development and success."

Karin Long, having coordinated one of the country's most successful city-sponsored SSN! Programs, was asked to serve on SSN's! new National Advisory Committee.

The Landlord Training Program applied for and received permission, from the Department of Regulation and Licensing for the State of Wisconsin Bureau of Direct Licensing and Real Estate, to now offer continuing education credits for Real Estate brokers under the Property Management Elective. This designation now opens up an opportunity to reach out to yet just one more section of the residential income property profession.

The Landlord Training Program is currently being developed into Spanish. The plan is to offer two sessions in Spanish and to video tape one session and make this available through the public library system and financial institutions. The program in English, is also available on video and DVD, through the library system, for those citizens who can't make our regularly scheduled classes. ☺

Do you own a mixed use building?

NIDC has money available to rehab mixed use buildings. Call Greg Johnson at 286-5692 for details and eligibility. ☺

New International Building Code hits in the stomach

The old State of Wisconsin Commercial Fire Code is gone and in its place is the International Building Code. It adopts a number of items contained in the International Fire Code (IFC).

Per IFC regulation 307.5 apartments and condos with wooden porches or balconies, are now off limits to BBQ.

As of July 1, 2002 it is illegal to have an open flame grill anywhere with in 10 feet of a combustible building material. This means propane grills on balconies with a combustible wall or ceiling are illegal. Any combustible porch or balcony is also excluded.

What are not included are 1 and 2 family homes. Alternatives include the use of electric grills. ☺

Reinspection Fees Get Results

by Inspector Joseph Payne

Recently I came across a landlord who previously ignored orders to repair the property. I started to issue the reinspection fees. He specifically said that it was the reinspection fees that got his attention. He wanted to make a deal to stop the fees or get them reduced. He was informed that nothing like that could be done. He then got a contractor to start the work immediately to avoid any additional fees.

He claims that he did not know that the fees were accumulating until he got the reinspection fee letter. There was supposed to be a manager who was taking care of the property; however, the managing company was doing nothing.

I have had more people call from out of state once they received the reinspection fee letters. They all wanted to know how they could stop the fees from accumulating and in all cases they were told that the only way was to correct the violations.

This is proving effective in the city as landlords that use to say "take me to court" are now getting the work done. They also say that the reinspection fees are too costly. It seems that the reinspection fee letter has gotten their attention. ☺

(Note: In 2001 DNS collected over \$700,000 in reinspection fees.)

DNS Environmental Update

by Dave Krey

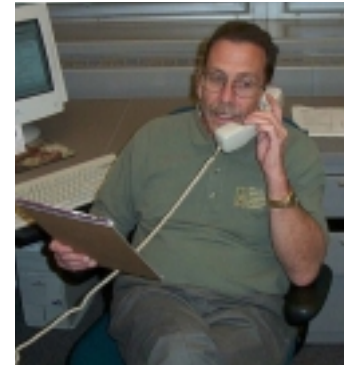
The City of Milwaukee has experienced a recent spate of illegal tire dumps over the past several months. These have occurred primarily on the south side of town. We have enlisted the services of a high tech camera (used in graffiti surveillance) in an effort to thwart the perpetrators. Our Waste Tire Coordinator vowed to work tirelessly to bring these scofflaws to justice, hopefully before he retires. Let Adam know if you're looking for a P215/65R Goodyear radial, there were some good ones in the pile! :)

In an ongoing cooperative effort with DPW, we have enlisted the assistance of the Parking Checkers on some of the illegal parking complaints received by DNS. Often, complaints cannot be verified through inspections conducted during normal work hours. A referral system has been set up to have 2nd and 3rd shift DPW staff check on some of these properties, report back to DNS for follow-up enforcement by Nuisance Control Officers.

S__t happens! Department was asked to look into some unusual scatological events occurring on the south side of Milwaukee. A service request was received from a homeowner who claimed that his house was the recipient of a fecal shower from the heavens above. He described it as blue/green/brown droplets sprayed on his house, driveway, sidewalk and as well as covering neighboring houses. The owner was advised on how to remove and properly disinfect the affected areas. It was believed that an airplane may have improperly dumped a holding tank over the unsuspecting neighborhood. A referral was made to the DNR and FAA. Less than a week later a similar incident occurred in the State Fair Park area. ☺

NSS TRIVIA

Since going on-line in July of 1999, the Property Data Page of DNS has had 2,099,000 hits. That's saved a lot of phone calls!



Tracy Williams was recently appointed as second in command by DNS Commissioner Martin Collins. Tracy will replace Deputy Commissioner Schuyler (Skip) Seager who is retiring after 31 years with the City.

DNS Deputy Commissioner Skip Seager Retires

by Schuyler (Skip) Seager

After 31 years with the City, I decided it was time to retire and enjoy the good life. It's not that I don't enjoy the job and the people that I have a chance to work with. I do very much, but there comes a point when it's time to move on. In response to the oft-asked question 'What are you going to do?' my answer at this point is 'Nothing terribly productive for a while.' I have a terribly rusty golf game that has to get cleaned up and lots of half-done projects waiting to be finished. Somewhere along the way I'll probably get another job as long as it doesn't cut into my leisure activities too much.

In 31 years I've accumulated a lot of memories and a lot of friends. There are numerous people to whom I owe thanks. It's not possible to name them all and if I tried I'd surely miss some so I won't even try. I want to thank all of you that I worked with for making my career a happy and satisfying one. ☺

Retirement brings changes to DNS administration

The retirement of Skip Seager as deputy commissioner has brought some reorganization to upper management in DNS. As a result, the deputy commissioner position is being eliminated and replaced with a chief operations officer position. It is a lower pay grade and certain responsibilities will be shifted to compensate.

One of the proposed changes is to move the Neighborhood Improvement Development Corporation (NIDC) to the Department of City Development. NIDC executive director Yolanda Mack would report to DCD Commissioner Julie Penman. The physical staff of NIDC would remain in their current location of the first floor of the Zeidler Municipal building. DNS Commissioner Collins said he believes the interaction between DNS and NIDC is a good thing and should continue. Also the budget limitations would prohibit many remodeling changes.

Commissioner Collins, who had oversight of NIDC, has high praise for the NIDC staff. Many of the NIDC accounting problems have been cleared up and a recent audit of NIDC gave a clean bill of health. Many of the changes implemented will continue to produce successful outcomes and sound fiscal controls.

Operationally there should be no disruption of services or contracts to participants. Tracy Williams, who was appointed DNS Chief Operations Officer, was previously the Supervisor of the Condemnation and Commercial Enforcement Sections. ☺



15th District Alderman Joe Dudzik addresses the media and neighbors gathered to complain about a garage that went too far.

Neighbors Complain to DNS about garage that's built too high

A news conference was held by Alderman Dudzik, the City Attorney's office and the Department of Neighborhood Services to halt the construction of large garage. The issue was a garage that neighbors say has been a thorn in their side for some time.

The building located in the 2500 block of S. 69th St. has a list of complaints starting in 1999. The owner, Phillip and Theresa Graczyk of Milwaukee have a history of nuisance complaints starting in April of 1999. There were numerous complaints and violations for garbage, illegal parking of boats and cars, tall weeds, piling of junk, and work without a permit.

The owners were warned in September of 2000 that their garage exceeded the allowable height on their permit. A board of zoning appeals ruling allowed a higher limit of 12 feet on the side walls and 20 feet total height. The new limit was again exceeded by the owners and orders were issued to stop in May of 2001. The owners appealed a second time and were denied. Citations were issued but no compliance was attained. As a result, the City Attorney's office took the rare action to force compliance by lowering the height of the building.

"The owners were notified by city inspectors about the height violations, but then thumbed their noses at the city and the neighbors and went ahead with construction anyway," said Alderman Dudzik. "The laws and regulations of the City of Milwaukee must be respected and adhered to, even in matters pertaining to new garage construction. There are very good reasons why we have conditions about the size and setbacks of various structures. In effect, they built the garage the way they wanted to, ignored the BOZA conditions, and then applied for a variance to keep it as built," the alderman said.

The city's lawsuit against the property owners, was filed in Milwaukee County Circuit Court, asks the court to issue a restraining order halting any further construction work on the garage, seeks a judgment finding that the garage is in violation of state building and zoning codes, and that the owners be ordered to comply with the Board of Zoning Appeals decision in the matter. The city is also asking that it be reimbursed for court costs and attorney fees.

Additional violations have been noted by plumbing inspection since the vent pipe exceeds allowed height and is unsupported. The case is expected to be heard October 10th. ☺

Milwaukee County's "Community Prosecution Unit"

by Al Garcia

Milwaukee County Assistant District Attorney Jeff Altenberg has been working with DNS, the police, community groups and citizens in his capacity as Community Prosecutor for a portion of the City's south side. Mr. Altenberg began his stint in early 2002. His target area is Oklahoma avenue to Pierce street, 16th to 27th streets. He has stated that he can occasionally work in other neighborhoods within the CDBG target area depending on the severity of the problem.

Funded with local CDBG monies, the initiative is described as a "pro-active crime and nuisance fighting collaborative." Specifically, the focus is to confront nuisance and/or illegal activities on predominantly rental properties and involve the building owner in addressing the problem.

The premise of legal repercussions by not cooperating with Mr. Altenberg is a clear attention getter. What's more, his involvement can have a positive effect on the quality of life in our neighborhoods.

Additionally, the program provides crime prevention presentations in schools, assists in Block Watch/Block Club development and implementation, presents home and neighborhood crime prevention techniques to citizens and refers investment property owners to DNS's Landlord Training Program.

Since his recent arrival, Jeff has met with community groups, DNS Supervisors and south side District Inspectors, Targeted Investment Neighborhood (TIN) representatives, religious leaders and police. He has worked with this department in addressing citizen complaints relating to not only nuisance behavior, but dwellings with pronounced code violations, litter and debris, unsecured vacant structures needing boarding up and accessing and understanding the DNS data base.

This front line approach by a DA office prosecutor in dealing with the apparent increase in nuisance behavior and illegal activities in our City can be a key tool to better neighborhoods. ☺

Spanish version of Anti-Graffiti brochures now available

One of the most helpful brochures for dealing with graffiti removal is now available in Spanish. There are two brochures on the topic.

The most useful is the "How to Remove Graffiti". This brochure goes through the steps and techniques to remove all kinds of graffiti from different surfaces. It explains the reasons for removal and options for getting free paint or assistance.

The second brochure is to help citizens make a complaint about graffiti. Citizens are reminded it is OK to dial 911 ONLY if they are currently witnessing vandals in the act of committing graffiti. Otherwise graffiti complaints can be called in to 286-8715 or e-mailed to graffiti@milwaukee.gov ☺

City Code Now On-Line

The City Clerks Office recently unveiled all of the City Charter Code of Ordinances on line. Besides searching on-line by key word, the entire code or chapter can be printed from the PDF and Microsoft Word documents. Go to the Frequently Request button on the home page of www.milwaukee.gov or use the URL of

<http://www.ci.mil.wi.us/citygov/council/isysintro.htm>

WISCONSIN LEADS WITH ICC CODE ADOPTION

by Henry Kosarzycki, AIA

In 1911 the State of Wisconsin enacted the "Safe Place" statutes. A product of that statute was the adoption of the 1914 building code, making Wisconsin the first state in the country with a building code. That first building code is essentially the same building code we used having evolved over the past 90 years. State Code requirements were primarily contained in chapters Comm 14, 50 to 64, 66 and 69. Chapter 14 can be viewed as the "post occupancy" or maintenance code, where chapters 50 through 69 address construction and alteration requirements.

By virtue of the state's lead in building code development, a number of building codes and rules around the country were modeled after the State of Wisconsin. Building code format, topics and specific requirements were also modeled after Wisconsin's performance based model. Evolving technology and engineering sciences over time began to play a greater role in code requirements as well, resulting in the evolution of model building codes.

As early as 1970, the State of Wisconsin Safety and Buildings Division paid close attention to the end users of the building code. During the 1970's the question of adopting a model code was not supported. Builders, owners and designers all agreed that the Wisconsin code was superior to any model code package. Later, as national standards from testing methods to performance models continued to evolve, the question of adoption was addressed again. Even though the model codes and standards continued to evolve into the 1980's we were not ready to replace the Wisconsin codes.

By 1990 the country was involved with four primary model code organizations. The development of these model codes based on proven test methods, years of statistical data as well as performance criteria suddenly caused many of us to take a closer look at the Wisconsin code. Now the question of which model code was best kept us from committing to change. Having heard that very concern from a number of professional organizations, the International Code Council was formed in 1996. The ICC met the challenge bringing together three of the model building codes being used nationwide. The final product of this process gave us the International Building Code. A building code that evolved from its earliest ancestor in Wisconsin has now been adopted by that same state.

After spending the last year studying the International Code Council suite of codes, the first thing that becomes apparent is the level of expertise applied to individual topic specific portions of the code. The final product of the ICC suite of codes is the result of hundreds of industry, technology and academic leaders gathering and integrating their knowledge in one complete document. But what about this change? What impact will it have on our industry?

Since our first building code adopted in 1914, the philosophy has been based on "What is the building used for?" and "What material is the building made out of?" Occupancy or use and construction type have been the two benchmarks driving our designs. The more intense or critical the use, the higher degree of construction type and protection. From that philosophy came the building blocks of the code; fire, egress, stability, energy and accessibility. Fire protection, fire resistance and understanding the threat of fire plays into the materials as well as height and area of our buildings. Egress, the ability to get out of any structure, plays an equally important role based on the threat of fire. Stability is also an important building block of any code which looks at the performance of our structures

involving dead load, live loads, snow loads and wind. Unfortunately, current events have caused us to re-evaluate all three of the aforementioned concerns. Examples of this would be; fire and products of combustion from an outside source or materials not directly involved with the structure, egress paths not only out but wide enough to serve rescue workers going in and stability based on forces beyond wind and snow.

The more recent additions under the watch of our building codes are energy and accessibility. Accessibility regulations created as a result of the Americans with Disabilities Act and the energy performance regulations are a product of stricter EPA mandates.

Understanding that foundation of building code theory, we all find ourselves entering through the same door. The new ICC suite of codes is going to be as new to the contractor as it is to the supplier or the designer. An industry that continues to strive towards excellence in final product and delivery by eliminating certain dividing lines can on this topic, find itself speaking one common language.

Understanding the basic principal and philosophy behind building and life safety codes and having revisited the history of the building code in Wisconsin, early indications from the design side of the table are positive. We will continue to design our buildings of wood, steel and masonry. We will have more opportunity to better define the use and occupancy of our buildings. We also will have a more direct national link to topic, material and product professionals. The current Wisconsin building code has served this state well. The document in many ways was ahead of its time looking at its adaptability over the years. With that stability in place, Wisconsin had the luxury of providing the rest of the country with a model to use and develop. With the committee hearings concluded, followed by legislative adoption the code the building industry can now look forward to using is a new tool which continues Wisconsin's rich history in quality buildings.

The benefits and positive results of this adoption are numerous and many have yet to be discovered. Minimizing the number of interpretations will provide the builder, designer and owner clear directives to building regulations. Topical instead of occupancy based organization of the code will provide the end user the ability to navigate the building code more efficiently. Three times as many occupancy classifications will give us the opportunity to construct buildings with greater attention to end user details in lieu of the previous method which at times resulted in applying building code criteria that best fit the proposed use. Finally, topic specific stewardship and updates based on input and advisory from national experts will be available.

The old cliché that "We're all in this together" may best describe the building industry in Wisconsin not only now but more so after July of 2002 when the new code takes effect. The philosophy of use and construction type remains the same. The building blocks of fire, egress, stability, energy and accessibility also remain the foundation. Finally, the objective of maintaining the highest quality of affordable building stock in Wisconsin remains the challenge we are all faced with. We have all contributed to leading the nation with the development of building regulations in Wisconsin and can look forward to continuing that tradition.

Henry Kosarzycki, AIA is an engineering program management consultant with the State of Wisconsin Department of Commerce Division of Safety & Buildings Bureau of Program Development. He currently holds a position with AIA-Wisconsin as director advisor. Henry can be reached by phone at 262.548.8615 or by email at hkosarzycki@commerce.state.wi.us.



The first of five restored Victorian-style homes are open for inspection at a ceremony with Mayor John Norquist. Four other homes next door are slated to be finished this fall.

NIDC Kilbourn Avenue Homes Hit the Market

In 1996 the news media converged on 23rd and Kilbourn Avenue to mark some notorious property being taken under control by the City. In 2002 the media returned, but this time it was to celebrate the reopening and hopefully the rebirth of the Kilbourn Avenue neighborhood. Five homes plagued by nuisance complaints and criminal activity ultimately were purchased by the City to be rehabilitated.

The Neighborhood Improvement Development Corporation (NIDC) worked over the next two years to restore the architecturally significant homes to their previous prime. As a group, the five homes are a signature statement for the area.

The first to market is located at 2423 W. Kilbourn Ave. The home was completely gutted and rehabilitated. It was originally built in 1871. The exterior also was restored to the Victorian era with consideration to maintaining the color and materials of the period. Neighborhood groups supported the renovation efforts to help stabilize their neighborhood. Federal Home dollars were maximized to help pay for the \$140,000 renovation. The first home has an appraised price of \$85,000. A purchaser for each of the homes will be selected by lottery to bid on the homes. Bidders can get on the list by being low-income and meeting other program qualifying requirements. Call Loyce Howard for more information on the Community Homes Program at 286-5981. ☺



Next in line...four more homes on Kilbourn are being renovated.

Commissioner's Corner

Property Recording Pays Off

by DNS Commissioner Martin G. Collins



Many rental property owners wonder, what is in it for them to comply with the rental property recording code? There are a number of benefits, but let me explain two of them.

In 2000 DNS did not regularly have Nuisance Control Officers call property owners where they had verified and written clean up orders and nuisance vehicle orders. We just processed it for contractor clean up and put the cost on the property's taxes. 18.2% of nuisance vehicles and 49.8% of clean up orders were abated by City contractors. In an attempt at a win-win for both DNS and the owners, a change was made midway through that year. When inspectors can reach owners through the telephone numbers filed as part of the property recording application, they will warn them that if they do not clean it up themselves soon, or remove a vehicle, the city will have a contractor do it.

What was the result? In 2002 [YTD], only 13.3% of nuisance vehicles have had to be towed by the City and only 27.8% of clean up orders were abated by city contractor. That means that a lot of owners did not get billed and were able to save a lot of money! It also means that we did not have to spend as much to abate these problems.

The second situation is illustrated by an incident that recently occurred. A car hit a building on the south side and the Fire Department wanted an inspector to view the damage. It was 11:00 PM. The city hall operator called me at home. The fire department report indicated that building was stable, but in need of repair. By accessing the recording file through the City's web site, I was able to get the owner's home number. I knew him to be a responsible owner and he was able to respond to the incident. It saved him the cost of having to send out a city crew on over-time. Owners do benefit from filing the recording application and by keeping their contact information up to date. ☺

NSS – Fire Improvements

by Carolyn Wood

In addition to fire prevention inspections, our Code Enforcement Commercial section also annually inspects covered openings, billboards, and projecting signs. In July, we went live with improvements to our Neighborhood Services System (NSS) Fire module to accommodate these other inspections. Now, we don't have to maintain separate small databases to track this information. It is also easier to inspect these other features at a property when performing a fire inspection.

Other changes include keeping a longer history of fire inspections and of inspector notes. We're still working on improved reporting capability for NSS-Fire, which should be available soon. ☺

Grapevine Editor: Todd Weiler, DNS, (414) 286-3214

tweiler@ci.mil.wi.us

MILWAUKEE WEBPAGE: WWW.MILWAUKEE.GOV